The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act – the Army's Challenge to Contemporary Officer Management

A Monograph
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13. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 Words)* Examination of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) revealed that major provisions of the law originated from legislative antecedents dating as early as 1947. At that time, three of the major concerns influencing officer management legislation were creating uniformity among the Services, promoting a youthful and vigorous officer corps, and ensuring the military's ability to quickly mobilize in the event of another major conflict. Despite significant organizational changes to the Army since initiation of these laws, DOPMA continues to impose an antiquated, time-based system of military officer management upon the Army. This system has repeatedly impeded the Army's ability to meet organizational requirements over the course of 30 years. In fact, the Army has had to seek suspension of key provisions of DOPMA in the 1990s (to achieve mandated reduction limits to its force) and more recently in 2005 (to facilitate expansion of the Army officer corps due to modularity). Furthermore, suspension of these provisions has occurred despite significant, repeated attempts by the Army to redesign its Officer Personnel Management System to function optimally under DOPMA.

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Abstract

DOPMA – THE ARMY'S CHALLENGE TO CONTEMPORARY OFFICER MANAGEMENT
by MAJOR Thurman C.C. McKenzie, U.S. Army, 41 pages.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has directed each of the military service chiefs to consider changes to officer management policies that will contribute to a more efficient and flatter military organization. However, it is not clear whether the Services actually have the ability to develop changes to officer career paths such as those espoused by Secretary Gates. Federal law – primarily, the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) – establishes the broad framework for current military officer management. An examination of four key provisions of DOPMA reveals that absent changes to the system imposed by this law, the Army lacks sufficient latitude to modify its officers' career paths in a way that facilitates future stated organizational requirements.

To determine the extent to which DOPMA inhibits the development of a contemporary Army officer personnel management system, it was necessary to do three things. First, it was necessary to describe the development and key elements of DOPMA. Next, it was necessary to determine whether the Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) has changed since DOPMA's inception; and if so, then identify to what extent these changes have enabled the Army to meet organizational requirements. Finally, it was necessary to examine changes in the military environment since DOPMA's inception.

Examination of DOPMA, its development and impact on the Army, revealed that major provisions of the law originated from legislative antecedents dating as early as 1947. At that time, three of the major concerns influencing officer management legislation were creating uniformity among the Services, promoting a youthful and vigorous officer corps, and ensuring the military's ability to quickly mobilize in the event of another major conflict. Despite significant organizational changes to the Army since initiation of these laws, DOPMA continues to impose an antiquated, time-based system of military officer management upon the Army. This system has repeatedly impeded the Army's ability to meet organizational requirements over the course of 30 years. In fact, the Army has had to seek suspension of key provisions of DOPMA in the 1990s (to achieve mandated reduction limits to its force) and more recently in 2005 (to facilitate expansion of the Army officer corps due to modularity). Furthermore, suspension of these provisions has occurred despite significant, repeated attempts by the Army to redesign its Officer Personnel Management System to function optimally under DOPMA.

This study provides context for understanding key issues involved in redesigning Army officer careers. Data presented identify four provisions of DOPMA that the Army, through coordination with the other Services and with assistance from the DOD, should seek to modify if it wants to acquire the skills and talents in its officer corps articulated in the Army Capstone Concept of 2009. The findings in this study facilitate additional research into specific alternatives to the existing officer management system. Considerations for such alternatives might include increased lateral-entry opportunities into the Army, a revised compensation and incentives system that considers individual talent and skills, and modifications to the existing retirement system. Ultimately, 21st Century requirements necessitate a change to the current system of officer management that has its roots in obsolescent, post-WWII concerns and legislation.

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Introduction

On May 8, 2010, Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Robert M. Gates delivered an address signaling his desire to reduce inefficiencies within the Department of Defense (DOD). He stated, "Given America's difficult economic circumstances and parlous fiscal condition, military spending on things large and small can and should expect closer, harsher scrutiny. The gusher has been turned off, and will stay off for a good period of time."[1] Secretary Gates went on to explain how he feels the department has become overly bureaucratic and is in need of structural reorganization. In August, he outlined several "efficiency initiatives" designed to "move America's defense institutions towards a more efficient, effective, and cost-conscious way of doing business."[2] In that statement, Secretary Gates criticized what he described as "brass creep," a situation in which persons of higher rank receive assignments to do things that lower ranking personnel could reasonably handle.[3] He went on to say, "We need to create a system of fewer, flatter, and more agile and responsive structures, where reductions in rank at the top create a virtuous cascading downward and outward."[4] Secretary Gates' comments suggest a pending reduction and reorganization of the military, particularly in its officer corps.

Signaling the change soon to affect the military, Secretary Gates has advocated the exploration of more flexible promotion systems and different career paths as a potential solution to the officer bloat that he has observed.[5] Interestingly, Secretary Gates is not the first SECDEF to intimate such a change. In 2001, then SECDEF Donald Rumsfeld made several comments

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[1] Robert M. Gates, Remarks delivered by the Secretary of Defense at the Eisenhower Library on Defense Spending in Abilene, KS, Saturday, May 08, 2010; available from http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1467 (accessed September 20, 2010).

[2] Robert M. Gates, Statement on Department Efficiencies Initiative delivered by the Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon, August 9, 2010; available from http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1496 (accessed December 9, 2010).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jim Tice, "Officers' Career Path to be Overhauled," *Army Times* (January 31, 2010), http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/01/army_officer_013110w/ (accessed March 27, 2011).

alluding to the need for changes to personnel policy. On one occasion, he stated, "Is the thought that maybe we ought not to bring people in, the best people we can find, train them, and then shove them out when they're 46 or 47 or 48 years old?"[6] Furthermore, he stated, "How can you run people through every 10, 12, 18 months in a job and expect them to know everything about the job? All they do is skip along the top of the waves."[7] Secretary Gates has gone a step farther than his predecessor by directing each of the military service chiefs to consider changes to their officer management policies. However, what is not clear is whether the Services actually have the ability to develop changes to officer career paths such as those espoused by the current and past SECDEFs.

Federal law – primarily, the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) – establishes the broad framework for military officer management. Congress established this framework more than 30 years ago when it enacted DOPMA in 1980. While each of the Services possesses broad authority under DOPMA to manage its officer corps in a manner that achieves individual organizational goals and objectives, policies that the Services develop must comply with DOPMA regulations. Therefore, the challenge for each of the Services today is to develop a 21st Century personnel management system that conforms to a mid-20th Century framework. Until the Services know whether DOPMA constrains their freedom of design relative to the personnel management requirements of the contemporary operating environment, they will not be able to engineer effective management systems that meet the intent of the SECDEF. An examination of four key provisions of DOPMA reveals that absent changes to the system imposed by this law, the Army lacks sufficient latitude to modify its officers' career paths in a way that facilitates future stated organizational requirements.

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[6] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness, *Military Personnel Human Resources Strategic Plan Change 1*, August 2002, http://prhome.defense.gov/docs/military_hr_stratplan3.pdf (accessed December 09, 2010), 1.

[7] Ibid, 1.

Methodology

To determine the extent to which DOPMA might inhibit the development of a contemporary Army officer personnel management system, it was necessary to do three things. First, it was necessary to describe the development and key elements of DOPMA. When Congress enacted DOPMA, the military was still recovering from the aftermath of the Vietnam conflict, and most significantly, it had recently transitioned to an all-volunteer force. There were concerns among military leaders and members of Congress about a "loss of talent" in the officer corps resulting from early retirements and perceived inequalities in the promotion system.[8] These issues prompted Congress to establish a system that would provide the new American force professional leaders who could maintain a competitive edge over the Soviet Union. "DOPMA established a common officer management system built around a uniform notion of how military officers should be trained, appointed, promoted, separated, and retired."[9] However, the system that DOPMA emplaced was actually quite similar to precursor legislation dating back as early as 1947. Despite significant changes in the size of the military, the manner in which it conducts operations, the orientation of this arm of the government toward contemporary threats, and the impact of technology on armed conflict, DOPMA remains the legal authority governing military personnel management.

Next, it was necessary to determine whether the Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) has changed since DOPMA's inception; and if so, then identify to what extent these changes have enabled the Army to meet organizational requirements. The Army's OPMS represents its application of specific provisions stipulated in DOPMA. Because DOPMA provides

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[8] Bernard Rostker, "Changing the Officer Personnel System," in *Filling the Ranks*, ed. Cindy Williams (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 151.

[9] Bernard Rostker, Harry Thie, James Lacy, Jennifer Kawata, Susanna Purnell, *The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980: A Retrospective Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1993), 7.

a "common officer management system"[10] for DOD, it limits the flexibility the Army has in dealing with personnel requirements unique to this Service. This fact becomes particularly evident when one considers the impact of changes to the Army's force structure since 2001. Analysis of OPMS during this and earlier periods of reorganization provided context for understanding the unique challenges the Army faces in functioning under the DOPMA system. Additionally, examination of OPMS and its multiple revisions revealed how DOPMA has bound the Army's attempts to modernize its officer management system.

Finally, it was necessary to examine changes in the military environment since DOPMA's inception. This examination facilitated the assessment of dissonance between emerging personnel management requirements of the Army and expressed provisions of DOPMA. Current trends suggest that future environments in which the Army may operate will closely resemble today's operational environment.[11] However, this environment is much different from that which existed when DOPMA came into being. The Army estimates that its officers will need much broader experiences and expertise in an array of fields to effectively deal with the increasingly complex environments and situations in which it may operate.[12]

Three prior research studies provided context, data, and analysis for understanding the impact of DOPMA on the Army over the course of its three decades of existence. The RAND Corporation's review of DOPMA published in 1993 enabled an understanding of the key elements of this complex law during its first decade of implementation. This review found that DOPMA failed to provide the DOD with the tools necessary to effectively deal with a dynamic

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[10] In this instance, "common" means uniform among the various military services - Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

[11] Robert C. Johnson, "Comments on the Army Capstone Concept" in *The 2009 Army Capstone Concept* [video], available at: http://www.vimeo.com/7066453 (accessed March 27, 2011).

[12] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *The Army Capstone Concept Operational Adaptability – Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, TRADOC Pam 525-3-0 (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 21 December 2009), 23.

environment.[13] During the military buildup in the 1980s and subsequent drawdown towards the end of the decade, the Services had to seek exceptions to various provisions in DOPMA to meet overall personnel end-strength requirements mandated by Congress. A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report published in 1999 facilitated understanding of the tremendous challenges faced by the Army in managing its officer corps during the second decade of DOPMA's implementation. This report found that in addition to exceptions to DOPMA provisions, Congress had to equip the Services with additional tools to meet their drawdown requirements. Finally, a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report published in 2006 provided understanding of the tension between DOPMA and the Army in the first part of the 21st Century. This report found that aggressive cuts in the Army's officer corps during the 1990s and changes in its force structure beginning in 2001 were the primary factors contributing to critical shortages in select Army officer grades today. The combination of these three reports facilitated understanding of DOPMA's impact on the Army from inception to current times.

Regarding the Army's OPMS and the Army's estimation of future requirements for its officer corps, again, three studies provided key insights. The Army's initial report on the OPMS published in 1971 provided context for understanding the underlying principles guiding Army officer management. Additionally, the Army's review of OPMS published in 1997 provided insight as to how the Army attempted to develop a 21st Century officer management system under the provisions of DOPMA. Finally, the Army's Capstone Concept (ACC), published in Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-0 facilitated understanding how the Army views its role in future armed conflict.

DOPMA

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), enacted by Congress in 1980, has its roots in post-WWII legislation. The DOPMA's most immediate legislative

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[13] Rostker, et al., v.

predecessors were the Officer Personnel Act (OPA) of 1947 and the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA) of 1954. Both of these laws sought to remedy post-WWII officer issues resulting from a changed environment in which the U.S. had become a world superpower. Prior to WWII, the U.S. Government managed the military through the War Department (Army) and the Navy Department. However, following the war, the U.S. Government consolidated these departments under a single Department of Defense and thus began the process of creating common policies to guide the services. The OPA and the OGLA reinforced Congress' desire for uniformity and addressed two senior military leader concerns: the need for a youthful officer corps and the ability of the Services to quickly mobilize in the event of a future war.

A brief examination of the history of DOPMA reveals how its major tenets stem from the three post-WWII concerns for uniformity among the Services, a youthful officer corps, and mobilization. Thus, as opposed to revolutionizing officer management in light of significant policy initiatives begun in the 1970s, DOPMA actually continued – although with slight modifications – officer management policies initiated following WWII. Additionally, this understanding of DOPMA provides context for analyzing the Army's Officer Personnel Management System.

Before DOPMA

The United States' new position as a world superpower and the experience of WWII fueled numerous discussions in the government regarding a reorganization of the nation's security apparatus. Despite overwhelming success in WWII, the U.S. Government's national security organization did not effectively coordinate and efficiently allocate resources. Evidence to this fact are the 75 temporary interservice agencies and interdepartmental committees that came into being during the course of the war to coordinate and resolve differences between the War and

Navy Departments.[14] Three themes developed around the topic of government reorganization and ultimately created the basis for legislation governing officer management: the need for uniformity among the military; a desire to develop and promote a youthful, spirited officer corps; and, the ability of the military establishment to quickly mobilize in the event of a conflict.

In 1944, with hearings on a "Proposal to Establish a Single Department of the Armed Forces,"[15] Congress began to consider changes needed to create better coordination between the military services. Over the next three years, debate continued with sharp differences between the Army and Navy. In a letter to Congress in 1945, President Truman signaled his support for the creation of a single department of defense with subordinate departments responsible for land, sea, and air.[16] Two years later, the Congress enacted the National Security Act of 1947. This act created the SECDEF and the National Military Establishment (which Congress later renamed the Department of Defense). It also subordinated the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and the newly created Air Force to the SECDEF.[17] With all of the services on equal footing, the Congress had created the framework for uniformity among the services. Subsequent legislation would continue to reinforce the desire for uniformity among the services while simultaneously addressing the issue of officer management and the need to adopt a system that facilitated rapid mobilization.

The experience of WWII created significant personnel management challenges and exposed deficiencies in the military's officer corps. A record of the hearing held on July 16, 1947, before the Senate Committee on Armed Services stated, "…the last war clearly demonstrated the

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[14] Roger R. Trask and Alfred Goldberg, *The Department of Defense 1947-1997: Organization and Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 1997), 3.

[15] Ibid, 4.

[16] Ibid, 6.

[17] *National Security Act of 1947*, Public Law 80-235, Chapter 343, 61 stat. 496. (July 26, 1947). Section 2 of the National Security Act of 1947 states, "In enacting this legislation, it is the intent of Congress to provide a comprehensive program for the future security of the United States…to provide a Department of Defense, including the three military Departments of the Army, the Navy (including naval aviation and the United States Marine Corps), and the Air Force under the direction, authority, and control of the Secretary of Defense…".

need for vigor and comparative youth in men holding positions of responsibility in the services."[18] Throughout WWII, Navy and Army officer numbers swelled in response to the military's massive mobilization effort. However, most of the officers mobilized occupied temporary wartime ranks that adversely affected the predictability of their careers. With the future of their military careers uncertain, many officers chose to leave the Service, which resulted in what one Senator deemed an "alarming rate" of officer attrition.[19]

For the Army, its seniority promotion system stagnated the careers of professional officers and made expectations of promotions unpredictable. In testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, then Chief of Staff of the War Department, began his remarks by saying, "I think that no great argument would have to be presented to show that our promotion system has been unsatisfactory. Until we got to the grade of general officer, it was absolutely a lock-step promotion; and short of almost crime being committed by an officer, there were ineffectual ways of eliminating a man."[20] General Eisenhower went on to express his belief in the importance of integrating new, young officers in the ranks to ensure the future viability of the services. However, implementation of this idea would necessitate a change to the Army's seniority system.

Equally important to military and government leaders at this time was the question of how the U.S. would establish a structure that would allow for rapid mobilization. Both world wars saw the Army grow and subsequently reduce in size in relatively short periods. In 1914, the Army numbered 98,544 active duty personnel. This number peaked at 2.4 million in 1918. Just one year later, the Army reduced its numbers by more than half, and in 1923, this number would

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[18] Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Officer Personnel Act of 1947,* 80th Cong., 1st sess., July 16, 1947, S. Rep. 609, 2

[19] Ibid, 2.

[20] *Hearings before the Senate Committee on Armed Services: H.R.3830*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., July 16, 1947, 1.

reach its post-war low of 133,243. The WWII figures are even more staggering. The Army's pre-war numbers counted 269,023 active duty personnel, and in 1945, this number reached 8.2 million. Just two years later, the Army had fewer than a million people in its ranks.[21]

One of the lessons from these experiences was that success in future conflicts depended on the nation's ability to mobilize resources.[22] With the Army functioning on a type of "closed" management system in which all personnel of a particular type (officer, warrant officer, enlisted) enter service at the bottom and advance upward based upon seniority, the ability to expand the force clearly rested in the management of personnel comprising the middle grades, and particularly officers. The Army's seniority system complicated this process, because personnel managers could not control the distribution of officers in the grades deemed necessary to support a rapid expansion or reduction in the size of the Army. These factors, coupled with the continuing desire to create uniformity among the services led Congress to enact the Officer Personnel Act (OPA) in 1947. That act provided "for the promotion and elimination of officers of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, and for other purposes."[23] Particularly, for the Army, the act served three purposes:

> Provide in law an adequate number of officers in the proper grades and of the proper ages to meet the needs of the services;
>
> Authorize grade distribution that would provide a sufficiently attractive career so that high-caliber people would be attracted to service; and
>
> Eliminate the weak officer as early in a career as possible.[24]

The OPA actually began as two separate pieces of legislation: one designed to address officer personnel management in the Army, and the other to address the same subject in the Navy.

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[21] All statistical data is from the U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center, Statistical Information Analysis Division, *Selected Manpower Statistics FY 2005.*

[22] Donald E. Vandergriff, *The Path to Victory* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2002), 75.

[23] *The Officer Personnel Act of 1947,* Public Law 80-381, Ch. 512, 61 Stat. 795, (August 7, 1947), 1.

[24] Rostker et al., 91.

However, consistent with the theme of uniformity, the Congress decided to consolidate the two pieces of legislation. This consolidation effort received support from both the Army and the Navy.[25]

Four provisions of OPA were particularly significant. First, OPA formally established limits on the number of regular officers in the services, and it fixed the percentage of these officers that could serve in each grade. Next, OPA authorized the SECDEF to promote officers on a temporary basis. This provision enabled flexibility in the management of officers and precluded the military from having to acquire congressional approval for changes to the mandated figures outlined in OPA. The third provision specified that the Army would commission all officers into the Regular Army as opposed to branches of the Regular Army. The Army sought this provision as a means of increasing career opportunities for officers. Prior to enactment of this law, Army officers received commissions directly into a particular branch and the opportunity to transfer from one branch to the other was administratively difficult. This provision reduced the administrative barriers to branch transfers within the Army by eliminating the requirement to receive Senate approval for such transfers.[26] Finally, OPA applied the Navy's "up-or-out" system across the services, ending the Army's seniority system. The new system created an orderly process for officers to advance through the various grades according to years in service. In addition to establishing criteria for advancement, OPA also addressed criteria for both voluntary and involuntary separation. This section of the law was quite detailed and essentially determined who the services would separate, and if eligible, retire. These officers were officers passed over

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[25] *Hearings before the Senate Committee on Armed Services: H.R.3830*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., July 16, 1947, 14.

[26] *Officer Personnel Act of 1947,* 80th Cong., 1st sess., July 16, 1947, S. Rep. 609, 3.

for promotion twice and those having served a specified number of years based upon rank attained.[27]

Several years passed before Congress realized OPA's impact on the Services. Temporary promotions authorized by the law increased significantly, and in 1953, a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee investigated this trend. The subcommittee concluded that, "while there was no over exaggerated grade structure in the armed forces, there were sufficient instances of senior officers occupying billets that more properly could be filled by junior officers and vice versa."[28] The Congress responded to this report by passing the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA) in 1954. This law maintained the provisions of the OPA; however, it established grade tables for each of the services. The grade tables specified the maximum number of personnel authorized in each grade. By doing this, the OGLA essentially regulated the temporary promotion authorization granted under the OPA. The other major provision of this law was the repeal of an earlier 1954 statute placing limits on voluntary retirements at 20 years of service. The Congress was concerned that too many officers would choose to take advantage of this option. However, after reassurance from the services that this would not be an issue, Congress approved the repeal of this provision. The decision regarding retirements would have significant consequences on the future design of officer careers.

Despite the intention of Congress to create uniformity among the services through the OPA and the OGLA, there remained disparities. The Army's implementation of the "up-or-out" system differed from the Navy's procedures, based upon its transition from the seniority system. The Congress actually enabled differences between the Air Force and the other Services when it granted the Air Force special provisions based upon the Air Force's creation in 1947. Additionally, national security requirements resulting from the Cold War continued to necessitate

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[27] *The Officer Personnel Act of 1947,* Public Law 80-381, Ch. 512, 61 Stat. 795, Section 509 (August 7, 1947), 112-115.

[28] House Hearings, 1953, pp. 2480-2482, quoted in Rostker et al., 95.

a larger number of officers than the OPA authorization and resulted in reserve officers serving

continuously on active duty for 20 or more years.[29] All of these factors resulted in the DOD

commissioning an "Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act" in 1960.

The committee recommended changes to the regular officer authorizations as well as

modifications to the "up-or-out" system, and the DOD submitted legislation to Congress based

upon these recommendations in the same year. However, the Congress did not act on it. All of the

previously mentioned problems continued until Congress directed the SECDEF to submit his

recommendations on officer grade limitations and appropriate legislation to accomplish these

limitations.[30] The SECDEF's report established the basic provisions for DOPMA, but it took an

additional four years for Congress to finally pass DOPMA.

Provisions of DOPMA

In the 30 years since DOPMA's passage, the law has undergone numerous revisions.

Nevertheless, the basic framework created in the original law remains and continues to reflect the

post-WWII concerns and legislation (OPA and OGLA) discussed previously. The U.S. Code,

Titles 10 and 37, capture the DOPMA framework. Relevant to this study are four major

provisions that:

> Establish statutory limitations on the number of officers who may serve in senior
> grades.
> Provide uniform promotion procedures for officers in the separate Services.
> Provide common provisions governing career expectation in the various grades.
> Establish common mandatory separation and retirement points for regular
> commissioned officers.

Table 1 displays the relationship between personnel management provisions addressed in this

study and their legislative source. From this table, one can see how DOPMA simply expanded

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[29] Rostker et al., 96.

[30] P.L. 92-561, October 25, 1972, 86 Stat. 1175, quoted in Rostker et al., 97.

upon existing provisions of OPA and OGLA as opposed to revolutionizing the officer

management system. An explanation of the four, aforementioned provisions of DOPMA provides

context for analyzing DOPMA in action.

Post-WWII Concerns			Personnel Management Provisions	OPA 1947	OGLA 1954	DOPMA 1980	DOPMA 1990	DOPMA 2006
Uniformity	Youthful, Vigorous Officer Corps	Mobilization	Grade controls limiting the number of officers serving in the military	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓
			Temporary promotion authority (provided to Secretary of Defense)	✓	✓+			
			Commissions into the Regular Army	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
			Up-or-Out	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
			Voluntary retirement at 20-years of service		✓	✓	✓	✓
			Tenure rules			✓	✓	✓
			Selective Early Retirement (SER)			✓	✓	✓
			Regular and Reserve Officer Commissions			✓	✓	
			Reduction-in-Force (RIF)				✓	✓
OPA = Officer Personnel Act OGLA = Officer Grade Limitation Act DOPMA = Defense Officer Personnel Management Act				* OGLA modified this provision, limiting the number of temporary promotions authorized by the Secretary of Defense * DOPMA modified this provision by imposing a grade distribution table				

Table 1: Evolution of DOPMA Provisions

Title 10 U.S.C, Chapter 32, "Officer Strength and Distribution in Grade" establishes

limitations on the number of officers who may serve in various grades in the military. The

DOPMA recognizes ten grades in each of the Services as depicted in Table 2.[31] For officers in the

grades of O-4 (Major/Lieutenant Commander), O-5 (Lieutenant Colonel/Commander), and O-6

(Colonel/Captain), DOPMA specifies the maximum number of officers permitted in each Service

based upon the annually approved total officer authorization (also referred to as end strength).[32]

This provision actually represents a combination and continuation of two provisions enacted by

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[31] The Army, Navy and Marine Corps also have a category of officers known as "warrant officers"; however, DOPMA does not apply to these officers. Instead, the Warrant Officer Management Act, enacted by the Congress in 1991, serves as the basis for managing this category of officers. See: Department of the Army, *DA PAM 600-3: Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 01 February 2010), 4.

[32] Each year, Congress authorizes the total military end strength and subsequently the total officer end strength based upon input from the DOD, historical data, and other factors. For more information regarding the development of military end strengths see Harry J. Thie and Roger A. Brown, *Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994).

the OPA and one enacted by the OGLA. This provision is significant because of two features that

result from its implementation.[33]

	Officer Pay Grades	Army/Air Force/ Marine Corps	Navy
Company Grade	O-1	2nd Lieutenant	Ensign
	O-2	1st Lieutenant	Lieutenant (junior grade)
	O-3	Captain	Lieutenant
Field Grade	O-4	Major	Lieutenant Commander
	O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander
	O-6	Colonel	Captain
Flag & General Officers	O-7	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (lower half)
	O-8	Major General	Rear Admiral (upper half)
	O-9	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral
	O-10	General	Admiral

Table 2: U.S. Military Officer Grades

First, DOPMA's authorizations for officers represent an arbitrary legal limit. Table 3

shows the DOPMA grade distribution table for the Army as of February 01, 2010. The authorized

officers listed in this table differ from those published when Congress enacted DOPMA in 1980.

The differences do not alter the underlying principles. For every 5,000 officers on activity duty,

the Congress authorizes the Army 1,493 field-grade officers.[34] These authorizations are wholly

independent of any of the five major determinants – national military strategy, doctrine and

operational concepts, organizational design and structures, force size and active-reserve

component force mix, and technology – that influence the number of officers actually required by

the Services.[35] Essentially, by fixing the distribution of field grade officers to total officer end-

strength, Congress has bound the Army's ability to effectively pursue any revolutionary changes

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[33] The two features discussed in this study are outlined in Rostker et. al., 7-9. This study updates the arguments made regarding these features using data from the February 01, 2010 version of the U.S. Code.

[34] In 1994, this authorization was 1,264 Army officers for every 5,000 officers on active duty. Rostker et al., 8. Additionally, the DOPMA excludes the following eight categories of officers from consideration when applying this table: specific Reserve officers, General and Flag officers, Medical officers, Dental officers, Warrant officers, Retired officers on active duty, two different types of Retired officers, and certain officers serving as Professors at the Federal Service Academies.

[35] Thie and Brown, xix.

to its officer corps. This problem will become evident later in this study during discussion of the Army's force restructuring initiative begun in 2001.

Total Number of Commissioned Officers on Active Duty	Maximum Number of Officers Authorized to Serve on Active Duty in the Grade of:			% of Authorized Company Grade Officers	% of Authorized Field Grade Officers
	O-4	O-5	O-6		
20,000	7,768	5,253	1,613	27	73
25,000	8,689	5,642	1,796	35	65
30,000	9,611	6,030	1,980	41	59
35,000	10,532	6,419	2,163	45	55
40,000	11,454	6,807	2,347	48	52
45,000	12,375	7,196	2,530	51	49
50,000	13,297	7,584	2,713	53	47
60,000	15,140	8,361	3,080	56	44
65,000	16,061	8,750	3,264	57	43
70,000	16,983	9,138	3,447	58	42
75,000	17,903	9,527	3,631	59	41
80,000	18,825	9,915	3,814	59	41
85,000	19,746	10,304	3,997	60	40
90,000	20,668	10,692	4,181	61	39
95,000	21,589	11,081	4,364	61	39
100,000	22,511	11,469	4,548	61	39
110,000	24,354	12,246	4,915	62	38
120,000	26,197	13,023	5,281	63	37
130,000	28,040	13,800	5,648	63	37
170,000	35,412	16,908	7,116	65	35

NOTE: Data listed under "Total Number of Commissioned Officers on Active Duty" and "Maximum Number of Officers Authorized to Serve on Active Duty in the Grade of" from the website for U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Law Revision Counsel, *U.S. Code 10* (2010), Chapter 32, Section 523 (a)(1), http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/10C32.txt (accessed March 14, 2011)

Table 3: DOPMA Grade Distribution

The column in Table 3 labeled "% of Authorized Field Grade Officers" illustrates the second significant feature of the DOPMA grade distribution table. When total officer end strength is lowest, field grade authorizations are at their highest as a percentage of total officers authorized. As officer end strength increases, field grade authorizations actually decrease as a percentage of total authorized officers. This fact illustrates how the post-WWII concern for mobilization and the system adopted to address this concern continue to influence officer management policy. By maintaining a higher percentage of field-grade officers at lower total levels, the Congress envisioned the Services could maintain various headquarters and administrative functions that in times of mobilization would assume greater responsibility and augmentation from mobilized forces. However, the Total Force Policy, initiated in 1971 and still

relevant today, implemented an alternative system for addressing mobilization. This policy increased the importance of military reserve forces in the development of plans to support national strategy.[36] Essentially, this policy made the military reserves an equal component for consideration in the development of military plans, triggering a major shift in the Services' organizations. The Services moved many of the headquarters, administrative functions, and other essential capabilities previously considered important for mobilization out of the active force and into the reserves.[37] With the Total Force Policy in place prior to enactment of DOPMA, the mobilization argument, which supported the grade distribution table, was no longer valid. Yet, the grade distribution table remained a key element in DOPMA.

The U.S. Code, Title 10, Chapter 36, "Promotion, Separation, and Involuntary Retirement of Officers on the Active-Duty List," addresses the other three major provisions of DOPMA relevant to this study. Again, these provisions are not revolutionary. Rather, they reflect the continuation of policies initiated by the OPA and OGLA. Congress expected career progression upon implementation of DOPMA to mirror the distribution in Figure 1. This figure shows the closed, time-based system structured by officer grades and years of commissioned service established by DOPMA. The system functions as a type of funnel. Rules governing promotion and separation regulate the flow of officers through the system and establish a natural order of movement upward from one grade to the next. Additional rules address entry into and subsequent exit out of the system.

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[36] In a memorandum dated 21 August 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird first articulated the Total Force Policy. For more information regarding this policy, see Patrick M. Cronin, *The Total Force Policy in Historical Perspective* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1987).

[37] Cronin, 7-8.
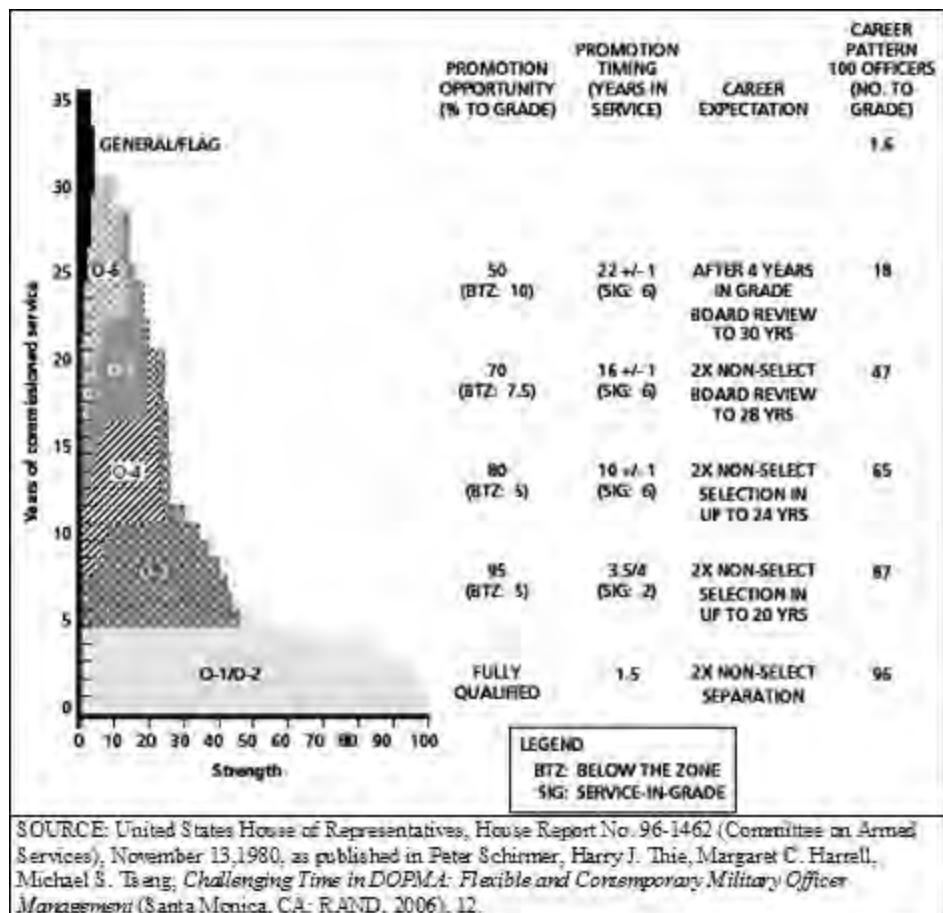
Figure 1: Dimensions and Characteristics of the Defense Officer Promotion System

	PROMOTION OPPORTUNITY (% TO GRADE)	PROMOTION TIMING (YEARS IN SERVICE)	CAREER EXPECTATION	CAREER PATTERN 100 OFFICERS (NO. TO GRADE)
GENERAL/FLAG				1.6
O-6	50 (BTZ: 10)	22 +/- 1 (SIG: 6)	AFTER 4 YEARS IN GRADE BOARD REVIEW TO 30 YRS	18
O-5	70 (BTZ: 7.5)	16 +/- 1 (SIG: 6)	2X NON-SELECT BOARD REVIEW TO 28 YRS	47
O-4	80 (BTZ: 5)	10 +/- 1 (SIG: 6)	2X NON-SELECT SELECTION IN UP TO 24 YRS	65
O-3	95 (BTZ: 5)	3.5/4 (SIG: 2)	2X NON-SELECT SELECTION IN UP TO 20 YRS	87
O-1/O-2	FULLY QUALIFIED	1.5	2X NON-SELECT SEPARATION	96

Years of commissioned service / Strength (0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100)

LEGEND
BTZ: BELOW THE ZONE
SIG: SERVICE-IN-GRADE

Barring a few exceptions, most officers enter the military from one of three commissioning sources in the grade of O-1.[38] Although DOPMA establishes education requirements for officers, separate legislation actually governs the officer accessions processes. Data presented later in this study will show the importance of these processes in determining various aspects of the officer corps. The time-based features of DOPMA provide that officers move through the system by "cohorts". Cohorts are groups that are initially determined by the year an officer enters the military. The DOPMA specifies "time-in-grade" requirements that officers must meet to be eligible for promotion, thereby making movement from one grade to the

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[38] DOPMA allows certain specialty categories of officers to enter the military in grades other than O-1. *U.S. Code, Title 10, Chapter 33*, "Original Appointments of Regular Officers in Grades Above Warrant Officer Grades," addresses these specialty categories.

next sequential. Additionally, promotion opportunity goals and promotion timing windows influence an officer's eligibility for promotion. Officers moving through the system pass through three "zones" for promotion in grades above O-1. If selected for promotion "below the zone", officers advance to the next grade ahead of their cohort peers. If selected for promotion while in the "primary zone", officers advance to the next grade with their cohort peers; and, if selected for promotion "above the zone", officers advance to the next grade later than their cohort peers. Regarding separations, DOPMA establishes limits on how long an officer can remain in a particular grade. Officers who fail to continue moving through the system in accordance with established rules face separation from the military.

The fact that this system applies to all Services reinforces the Congress' intent for uniformity in the military. Additionally, this system allows for a continuous flow of officers in, up, and out of the Services, thereby continuing the practice of supporting a young and vigorous officer corps initially voiced after WWII. However, just as implementation of OPA resulted in unintended consequences contrary to its original design, a review of DOPMA in action reveals how this law has not functioned as originally intended.

DOPMA in Action

The four provisions of DOPMA discussed in this study, demonstrate the complexity of this law. Complexity implies a system of interdependent parts.[39] The DOPMA grade distribution table limits the number of officers in various grades while rules for promotion and separation equally influence the number of officers in these grades. The single-entry, time-based system constructed by DOPMA creates the relationship between various provisions of the law. As long as total officer strength remains constant, the system functions as intended. However, when total officer strength changes, for instance during times of buildup or drawdown, the system becomes

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[39] Yaneer Bar-Yam, *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems In A Complex World* (Cambridge, MA: Knowledge Press, 2004), 19.

unbalanced, creating tension between the various provisions of the law. The DOPMA grade

distribution table assigns an instantaneous change in the distribution of officers based upon an

increase or decrease in total officer end strength. This provision is inconsistent with the closed,

time-based management system established by DOPMA, because the rules governing promotion

and separation preclude the Services from making instantaneous changes consistent with the

grade distribution table. An examination of the DOPMA system in action illustrates this tension

between the various provisions of the law.

Figure 2 shows the total military officer strength and officer accessions into the military

from Fiscal Year (FY) 1973 to 2009.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Population Representation in the Military Services FY2009 Report*, 19.
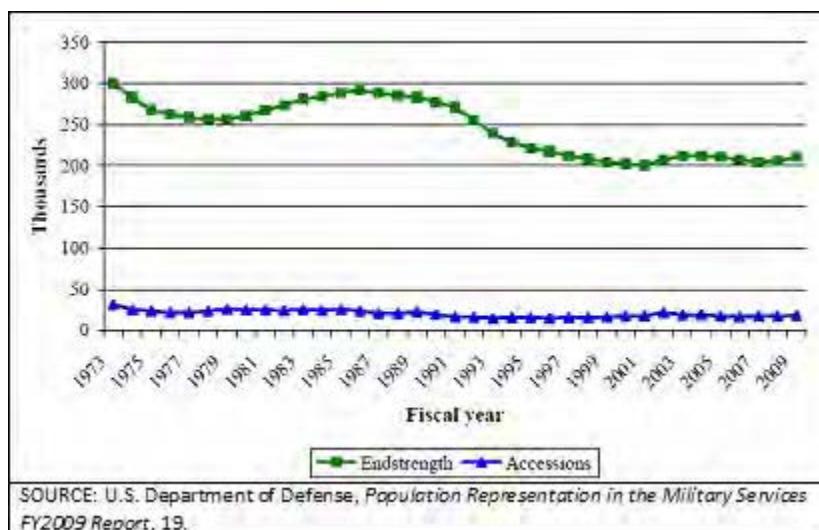
Figure 2: Officer End Strength and Accessions, FY 1973-2009[40]

In the first six years of DOPMA's implementation, total military officer strength grew by nearly

12 percent.[41] A 1988 *Defense Officer Requirements Study,* conducted by the DOD, attributed this

growth to an increase in demand caused by "force expansion and modernization."[42] Under the

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[40] Data contained in this figure do not include warrant officers.

[41] See Appendix A, Table 9 for a complete listing of Active Component Officer Strength from FYs 1973-2009.

[42] Department of Defense, *Defense Officer Requirements Study*, March 1988, pp. 32-36, as quoted in Rostker et al., 23.

DOPMA system, total officer strength is a function of accessions and separations. From 1980 to 1986, officer accessions remained relatively constant at an average of 24,620 new officers per year.[43] Therefore, officer separations had to decrease to account for the growth in officer strength during this time. While statistics on officer separations during this period were not available for this study, an analysis of promotion statistics provides insight as to the influence that promotions have on separations.

DOPMA allows the Services to adjust both the volume (measured by promotion opportunity) and rate (measured by promotion timing) of officers moving through the system. Data reveal that from 1980 to 1986, the Services primarily used volume controls to meet officer demand and grow the officer corps. Table 4 depicts average promotion opportunity and promotion timing from 1980 to 1990 for grades O-4 to O-6. From 1980 to 1986, the average promotion opportunity exceeded the DOPMA goal by 5 percent for O-4s, 7 percent for O-5s, and 9 percent for O-6s, thus indicating the increased volume of officers moving through the system. Average promotion timing during this period remained within DOPMA established windows for grades O-4 thru O-6. Therefore, increased promotion opportunity during this time had the effect of reducing officer separations and, thereby, accounts for the increase in officer strength during this period. This analysis reveals that DOPMA provisions were effective in facilitating growth of the officer corps from 1980 to 1986. However, further analysis reveals that the same is not true for reductions in officer strength that occurred after this period.

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[43] See Appendix A, Table 8 for a complete listing of Active Duty Officer Accessions from FYs 1973-2009.

		O-6	O-5	O-4
		Average Promotion Opportunity*		
	Years	DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%
Army	1980-86	56%	80%	82%
	1987-90	47%	73%	73%
Navy	1980-86	63%	79%	88%
	1987-90	56%	72%	83%
USMC	1980-86	60%	75%	81%
	1987-90	51%	68%	75%
Air Force	1980-86	55%	75%	90%
	1987-90	55%	75%	89%
DOD	1980-86	59%	77%	85%
	1987-90	52%	72%	80%
		Average Promotion Timing⁺		
		DOPMA = 22 +/- 1	DOPMA = 16 +/- 1	DOPMA = 10 +/- 1
Army	1980-86	21 yrs 11 mos	16 yrs 4 mos	11 yrs 2 mos
	1987-90	22 yrs 4 mos	17 yrs 4 mos	11 yrs 5 mos
Navy	1980-86	21 yrs 3 mos	14 yrs 11 mos	9 yrs 3 mos
	1987-90	21 yrs 3 mos	15 yrs 2 mos	9 yrs 11 mos
USMC	1980-86	21 yrs 10 mos	15 yrs 8 mos	10 yrs 6 mos
	1987-90	21 yrs 10 mos	16 yrs 7 mos	11 yrs 6 mos
Air Force	1980-86	20 yrs 7 mos	15 yrs 11 mos	11 yrs 5 mos
	1987-90	21 yrs 4 mos	16 yrs 1 mos	10 yrs 6 mos
DOD	1980-86	21 yrs 5 mos	15 yrs 9 mos	10 yrs 7 mos
	1987-90	21 yrs 8 mos	16 yrs 4 mos	10 yrs 9 mos

NOTE: Data used to construct this table from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P) (MM&PP) (O&EPM), August 19, 1991, as published in Bernard Rostker, Harry Thie, James Lacy, Jennifer Kawata, and Susanna Pumell, *The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980: A Retrospective Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1993), 106-107.

*Average promotion opportunity for all competitive categories is computed by totaling all officers due course, above, and below zone promotions and diving by the number of officers in zone.

⁺Average promotion point for all competitive categories is the number of years and months of active commissioned service plus entry-grade credit at which officers earn promotion to a particular grade.

Table 4: Average Promotion Opportunity and Timing, 1980-86 and 1987-90

In 1986, the Congress directed the DOD to reduce officer strength by 6 percent of its FY 1986 levels.[44] "The reduction was to be accomplished in annual l-, 2-, and 3-percent increments beginning in fiscal year 1987 and [to be] completed by the end of fiscal year 1989."[45] The DOD received authorization to defer most of these reductions until 1989. However, the end of the Cold

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[44]The Congress was concerned about the exploding growth of officers relative to that of enlisted personnel. From 1980 to 1986, active duty enlisted personnel strength grew by 4.8% compared to the 12% growth in officers during this time. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Officers: Assessment of the 1988 Defense Officer Requirements Study*, GAO/NSIAD-88-146, April 1988, 1.

[45] Ibid, 1.

War led to even more reductions as the entire military reduced in size.[46] These factors contributed to the 15 years of decline in officer strength depicted in Figure 2.

Reductions in the system can occur most immediately through adjustments in accessions. In 1987, total officer strength decreased from the previous year by 3,251 officers. To accomplish most of this reduction, total Service accessions decreased by 2,975 officers, accounting for nearly 92 percent of the reduction in officer strength from 1986 to 1987. Because DOPMA requires nearly all officers to enter the military in the grade of O-1, total officer strength is extremely sensitive to officer accessions. Failure of the services to access sufficient numbers of officers each year jeopardizes the future strength and capabilities of the officer corps. A modest increase in total officer accessions in 1988 and a more substantial increase in 1989 suggests awareness on the part of the Services of this relationship. However, beginning in 1990 and continuing through 1993, officer accessions decreased each year by an average of 1,915 officers. These decreases only accounted for approximately 17 percent of total officer strength reductions during that time. In fact, data reveal that reduced accessions continued to account for only 6.7 percent of the change in total officer strength from 1994 to 2001. Therefore, separations had to account for the majority of officer strength reductions from 1988 to 2001. During this time, the Services experienced numerous challenges to meet reduction mandates because of DOPMA's limited provisions for separating officers.

DOPMA establishes tenure limits that constrain the ability of Services to actively reduce officer strength. Rules stipulate that officers must leave the military if they fail to achieve promotion to any grade from O-2 to O-5 after their second consideration for that grade.[47] The law

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[46] In 1987, the DOD counted more than 2.1 million active duty personnel in the Services. This number decreased for 13 years, reaching approximately 1.3 million active duty personnel in 2005. See Appendix A, Tables 6 and 7 for a complete list of active duty military personnel from 1959-2005.

[47] The one exception to this rule applies to officers in the grade of O-1. Should these officers not qualify for promotion at any point, they must leave the military "at the end of the 18-month period beginning on the date on which the officer is first found not qualified for promotion." U.S. Code 10, Chapter 36, Section 630.

also allows officers who achieve the grade of O-3 or higher to remain on active duty for 20 years or longer, thus making these officers eligible for retirement. These features describe the natural order of the system. Initially, DOPMA only provided three measures to influence this natural order: separation of officers with fewer than five[48] years of active duty service, separation of officers possessing a reserve commission,[49] and a measure referred to as selective early retirement (SER).[50] The first two measures affect those officers who have the least amount of time in service. However, in 1988, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) determined that the Services were significantly over strength in the number of officers with 16 to 20 years in service.[51] Therefore, use of these two measures would have had no impact on the Services' over strength officer population. The third measure, SER allows the Services to involuntarily retire officers in the grades of O-5 thru O-8 who have achieved 20 years of active duty service. The Services tend to prefer not using the SER measure, because it forces officers who have loyally served to potentially incur reduced retirement benefits.[52] This analysis reveals that under the original DOPMA framework, the Services had no tools to actively reduce the population of officers with 11 to 19 years of service.

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[48] In 2008, the Congress modified this measure to apply to officers with fewer than six years of active duty service.

[49] Initially, DOPMA authorized the Services to offer two types of commissions: reserve and regular. Officers possessing a reserve commission had to receive a regular commission by their 11th year in service or before reaching the grade of O-4 to remain on active duty. The Services granted graduates of their academies regular commissions upon initial entry. Most other officers received reserve commissions. This process changed in 1996 when all officers, regardless of commissioning source, began their service with reserve commissions. This process changed, again, in 2005 when Congress directed all officers commissioned on active duty to receive a regular commission. *Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2005*, Public Law 108-375, 118 Stat., 1812, Section 502 (October 28, 2004).

[50] The Services may also separate officers for disciplinary reasons at any point. However, DOPMA is not the primary legislative document governing this type of action.

[51] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Officers: Assessment of the 1988 Defense Officer Requirements Study*, 2.

[52] For specific information regarding retirement benefits, see the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Retired Pay webpage at: http://www.dfas.mil/rapay.html.

In 1990, Congress amended DOPMA and granted the Services an authority referred to as reduction-in-force (RIF). This measure allows the Services to circumvent tenure rules and involuntarily separate officers to achieve reduction targets.[53] Similar to SER, it is controversial because of its adverse effect on morale. Most officers expect to continue serving in the military until choosing to voluntarily separate or retire. By involuntarily imposing separation on officers, RIF violates this expectation.[54] Additionally, Congress relaxed retirement rules to encourage mid- and senior-level officers to voluntarily leave the military. In 1992, and again in 1993, Congress provided the Services additional incentive programs to assist in reaching reduction mandates. These programs targeted officers with fewer than 20 years of active duty service. They offered reduced separation benefits in exchange for an officer's voluntary separation from the military. By targeting specific populations of officers, these programs allowed the Services to reduce their dependence on RIF to meet reduction targets.[55]

Officer reductions reached their highest levels between 1992 and 1994. During these years, officer strength decreased by 42,420. This change produced a significant and immediate decrease in the DOPMA authorized distribution of field grade officers. Corresponding to this change was increased pressure on the Services to employ involuntary separation measures to quickly bring officer distribution levels into compliance with law. The Congress responded in 1996 by significantly revising the DOPMA distribution table, relieving some of the tension

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[53] The National Defense Act for FY 1991 initially granted this authority for a period of five years beginning on October 1, 1990. After changes in 1993, 1998, and 2000, the DOD retained RIF authority from October 1, 1990 to December 31, 2001. In 2006, the Congress, again, granted this authority from October 1, 2006 to December 31, 2012. *U.S. Code 10, Chapter 36, Section 638a, Amendments*.

[54] Although authorized to use RIF, A 1993 GAO report assessed that, "DOD has given priority to achieving voluntary reductions." U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Downsizing: Balancing Accessions and Losses is Key to Shaping the Future Force*, GAO/NSIAD-93-241, September 1993, 3.

[55] For more information on the 1992 and 1993 incentive programs, see Congressional Budget Office (CBO), *The Drawdown of the Military Officer Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, November 1999), 10-12.

created by the drawdown and DOPMA.[56] While each of the Services employed these tools in different ways based upon Service-specific goals, the net effect was a 31 percent reduction in officer strength from 1987 to 2001.

The analysis of DOPMA reveals a law that imposes upon a 21st century Army a system rooted in post-WWII concerns. DOPMA reinforces the desire of Congress to achieve uniformity in the military by establishing an overarching framework for officer personnel management. Rules establish a natural order in which officers continuously move through the system, reflecting Congress' desire for a young and vigorous officer corps. The effectiveness of DOPMA in managing the growth in officer strength from 1980 to 1986 reveals how mobilization concerns influenced the development of its provisions. However, these provisions were inadequate for managing the significant reductions in officer strength from 1987 to 2001. Only through temporary changes to DOPMA and the implementation of voluntary separation incentive programs was the military able to achieve its reduction goals.

Each of the Services managed its officer reduction process through their own officer personnel management system. As this analysis has shown, these subordinate systems function within the provisions of DOPMA. Therefore, by default, DOPMA constrains the actions available to Service personnel managers. However, the existence of these subordinate systems and the different approaches taken by each Service to achieve mandated strength and distribution targets suggests that DOPMA provides sufficient latitude for the Services to develop programs unique to their needs. An examination of the Army's officer corps during the post-Cold War drawdown and first years of the 21st century reveals the extent to which DOPMA constrains the Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS). Specifically, the analysis shows that the four provisions of DOPMA previously discussed have contributed to the development of critical officer shortages that threaten the future effectiveness of the Army.

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[56] *U.S. Code 10, Chapter 32, Section 523, Amendments.*

Army Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS)

From 1986 to 2001, the Army reduced its officer end strength by more than 30,000 officers. The Service accomplished this reduction through a combination of deep accession cuts and equally drastic separations. However, since 2002, the Army has completely changed course and has begun increasing its officer corps, again. Previous analysis presented in this study suggests that the provisions of DOPMA should enable the Army to sufficiently increase its strength to meet its needs, but a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report to Congress dated July 5, 2006, observed that the Army was projecting shortages of officers from FY 2007 through FY 2013 (barring an improvement in accessions and officer retention).[57] Furthermore, that shortage could leave unfilled 15 to 20 percent of all positions for majors.[58] Similar to its drawdown effort following the Cold War, the Army is employing numerous tools to grow its ranks and reach its manning requirements. These efforts include an increase in accessions, expanded use of "selective continuation boards,"[59] and several incentives intended to increase officer retention. Most controversial has been the Army's considerable increase in both the rate and number of officers it promotes to captain and major. These policies have prompted criticism from many regarding the management of the Army officer corps.[60]

According to Department of the Army (DA) Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, the purpose of the Army's OPMS is to:

> *Acquire.* Identify, recruit, select and prepare individuals for service as officers in our Army.

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[57] Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report RL33518 (Congressional Research Service, July 5, 2006), 1.

[58] Ibid, 1.

[59] Selective continuation boards determine whether officers in the grades of O-3 to O-5 who have twice failed to achieve promotion may continue serving until established continuation limits. See *U.S. Code 10, Chapter 36, Subchapter IV* for rules governing these boards.

[60] See, Mark Mazzetti, "Army's Rising Promotion Rate Called Ominous", *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 2006, http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jan/30/nation/na-officers30 (accessed March 14, 2011).

Develop. Maximize officer performance and potential through training and education in accordance with AR 350–1, assignment, self-development and certification of officers to build agile and adaptive leaders.

Utilize. Assign officers with the appropriate skills, experience and competencies to meet Army requirements and promote continued professional development.

Sustain. Retaining officers with the appropriate skills, experience, competencies and manner of performance to meet Army requirements and promote continued professional development.

Promote. Identify and advance officers with the appropriate skills, experience, competencies, manner of performance and demonstrated potential to meet Army requirements.

Transition. Separate officers from the Army in a manner that promotes a lifetime of support to the Service.[61]

Of the six tenets of officer management described in this purpose statement, two – *promote* and

transition – are wholly dependent upon provisions of DOPMA previously outlined in this study.

Therefore, criticism of the Army's officer management procedures must take into account the

impact of DOPMA. In fact, an examination of the OPMS development over time reveals that the

Army has adapted it in reaction to environmental changes, but these efforts are inadequate

because of the constraints imposed by DOPMA.

Evolution of Today's Army OPMS

Today's Army OPMS finds its roots in policy dating back 40 years. In 1970, then Chief

of Staff of the Army, General (GEN) William Westmoreland, commissioned a study on military

professionalism. The study described the existing climate of the Army (as articulated by

participants of the study) as, "one in which there is disharmony between traditional, accepted

ideals, and the prevailing institutional pressures. These pressures seem to stem from a

combination of self-oriented, success-motivated actions, and a lack of professional skills on the

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[61] Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management*, DA Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1 December 2010), 10.

part of middle and senior grade officers."[62] The findings of this study prompted GEN

Westmoreland to direct improvements in Army professionalism, particularly in the area of,

"philosophy and mechanics of officer career management."[63] The result was the development of

the Army's OPMS in 1971.

This inaugural version of OPMS continued the Army's emphasis on preparing officers

for command and senior managerial responsibilities. However, significant to this new system was

the Army's acknowledgement of and provisions for officers outside of the traditional command

and senior managerial career paths. In describing the scope of OPMS, the architects stated:

> Fundamental to the plan is a subdivision of the officer corps into competitive
> promotion lists that fosters professional and technical competence, recognizes
> individual specialties, and limits nonproductive competition by clarifying
> opportunities, conditions, satisfactions, and limitations afforded each
> subdivision.[64]

Implementation of OPMS occurred over several years to preclude any major disruptions in the

officer corps. Yet, two of the six "policy areas" that OPMS addressed – the grade structure

system and promotion system – required legislative changes for implementation. Therefore, these

areas would not take effect until Congress acted. Ultimately, the grade structure system and

promotion system proposed by OPMS would closely resemble the system established by

DOPMA in 1980. The OPMS system assumed an officer career of 30 years (despite the ability of

officers to retire with significant benefits at 20 years of service), and proposed the promotion

timing listed in Table 5.

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[62] U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 30 June 1970), iii-iv.

[63] Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, *The Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS)* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 25 June 1971), 1.

[64] Ibid, 2.

PROMOTION TO	YEARS OF AFCS
COLONEL	20-23
LIEUTENANT COLONEL	16-17
MAJOR	10-11
CAPTAIN	5
1ST LIEUTENANT	2
AFCS = Active Federal Commissioned Service	

Table 5: Proposed OPMS Promotion Timing

"These promotion points were determined based on the time necessary to accumulate experience and be assigned one or more duties in a serving grade."[65] (Interestingly, 40 years later, these promotion timing windows remain despite significant changes in the environment that this study will address.) The enactment of DOPMA enabled a complete implementation of OPMS and prompted the Army's first review of the system in 1983. Although this review generated changes to OPMS, none of these changes necessitated adjustments to the DOPMA framework.[66]

The OPMS generated by the 1983 review remained in place for nearly 15 years. During that time, the post-Cold War drawdown and enactment of three significant pieces of legislation – the Gold-Water Nichols DOD Reorganization Act in 1986, the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act in 1990, and Title XI legislation for Active Component Support to the Army National Guard and Army Reserve in 1993 – significantly changed officer requirements.[67] The combined effect of these events was a critical shortage and an increase in requirements for Army officers in select grades.[68] The deficit in Army officers forced personnel managers to pursue a series of corrective measures that ultimately led to increased concerns among officers about inequalities in the system and anxiety about career security.[69] Responding to these issues, the Army Chief of Staff initiated another review of OPMS in 1996. GEN Dennis Reimer's guidance

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[65] Ibid, D-6.

[66] David D. Haught, *Officer Personnel Management in the Army: Past, Present, and Future* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 7 April 2003), 2.

[67] Officer Personnel Management System XXI Task Force, *OPMS XXI: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: Officer Personnel Management System Study, 9 July 1997), vi.

[68] Ibid, vii.

[69] Ibid, viii.

was to, "review and update the current OPMS to ensure that the system continues to develop officers to meet the challenges of a changing world – officers who can fight and win today's wars and wars of an uncertain future."[70] Given the goal of the review was the creation of a system that would meet the challenges of the 21st Century, the Army named the task force conducting the review "OPMS XXI". GEN Reimer's guidance focused the task force on issues directly under the Army's control. However, as the task force would acknowledge in its final report, constraints imposed by DOPMA significantly contributed to existing officer management challenges.[71]

In 1997, the OPMS XXI Task Force released its final report. In it, the task force recommended several changes that sought to optimize the functioning of OPMS. Of the eight broad recommendations proposed by the task force, none addressed pursuing changes to DOPMA.[72] This fact is important because throughout the report, a consistent theme was the need for *time* to develop critical expertise in both officers and organizations. The report stated that trends in modern warfare necessitated the development of "officers with deep experience and expertise to meet all of the Army's complex systemic needs."[73] Although the Army controls the career paths of its officer corps, the timing of these paths is largely dependent upon DOPMA. DOPMA limits the amount of time an officer can remain in a particular grade and, thus, limits the amount of time an officer has to develop "expertise" in a particular area. Therefore, while the task force was able to modify OPMS to allow officers increased opportunities for individual development, exploration of these opportunities carried with them the trade-off between continued career advancement and individual satisfaction.[74] Unfortunately, the OPMS

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[70] Ibid, vi.

[71] Ibid, xiv.

[72] Ibid, iv.

[73] Ibid, ix.

[74] OPMS XXI introduced a "Career-Field-Based System" that allowed officers to compete for promotion in one of four "career fields" upon becoming a major. According to the system, most officers continued to compete in the "operations" career field, while a select number of officers competed in the

implemented in 1998 was limited in its ability to accomplish its stated intent of, "fulfill[ing] Army requirements with an officer corps balanced with the right grades and skills."[75]

OPMS Constrained

In 2001, the Army began a major transformation. The Modular Force Initiative or "modularity" redesigned the Army around brigade combat teams (BCTs) as opposed to divisions. From 2001 to 2006, this change increased the number of officers required by more than 4,000.[76] To meet these requirements, the Army initially, increased accessions and promotion opportunities. In 2001, officer accessions increased by nearly 12 percent from their low just two years earlier, and promotion opportunities exceeded DOPMA goals for grades O-3 through O-6.[77] These actions enabled the Army to end its 15 years of decline in officer end strength. The latest data available shows that from FY 2002 to FY 2009, Army officer strength increased by more than 14 percent. Officer accessions accounted for only 16 percent of this increase. Therefore net officer retention had to account for most of the officer strength increase during this period.[78] In the military's closed, time-based system, net officer retention indicates growth in mid- and senior-level grades. Given the Army's need to grow its officer corps during this time, an increase in net officer retention might seem to indicate a properly functioning OPMS. However, a closer examination reveals otherwise.

"operational support", "information operations", or "institutional support" career fields. The career field in which an officer competed for promotion determined the career opportunities available him.

[75] Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management*, DA Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1 October 1998), 1.

[76] Henning, 5

[77] See Appendix A, Table 11: Officer Promotion Opportunity, FY 2001-2005.

[78] Net retention is the expression of an increase in officer strength in excess of the change in accessions from one year to the next. See Appendix A, Table 13: Net Retention and Separation of Officers, FYs 1980-2009.

Attacks on the U.S. in September of 2001 motivated many officers to remain in the Army as evidenced by FY 2002 officer strength numbers.[79] In that year, officer strength increased for the first time in 15 years. That increase was the result of a net retention of 1300 officers. Contributing to the retention was an increase in promotion opportunities well in excess of DOPMA goals for O-4s and O-5s.[80] Additionally, the Army reduced time in service requirements for promotion to captain from 42 to 38 months.[81] The Army employed all of these measures to remedy its shortage of mid-level officers created by the post-Cold War drawdown and modularity. In FY 2003, the Army increased promotion opportunities again for O-4's and O-5s, exceeding the DOPMA goals for each of these grades by 13.8 and 9.6 percent, respectively.[82] With accessions still relatively high and the Army promoting more officers at a faster rate, net retention increased for a second year, but the Army still required more mid-level officers.

The strain on OPMS to manage the officer corps while transforming and waging wars in Afghanistan and Iraq assumed a new dimension in 2003. One of the first indicators of this increased strain was the Army's implementation of the unit stop loss/stop movement program.[83] Despite implementation of stop loss, net retention of Army officers dropped by more than 50 percent in FY 2004. The following year, net retention was down nearly 95 percent from its FY 2003 high. The Army was hemorrhaging officers, particularly captains and majors. Thus, in 2005, the Army used the ongoing 2001 Presidential Declaration of National Emergency as justification

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[79] The attacks on the U.S. occurred on September 11, 2001, and FY 2001 ended on September 30, 2001. Therefore, any major effect on Army officer strength would most likely appear in FY 2002 numbers.

[80] See Appendix A, Table 11: Officer Promotion Opportunity, FY 2001-2005.

[81] Henning, 10.

[82] See Appendix A, Table 11: Officer Promotion Opportunity, FY 2001-2005.

[83] U.S. Army Human Resources Command, *Implement Active Army Unit Stop Loss/Stop Movement Program,* MILPER Message Number: 04-032 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 21 November 2003). Prior to this announcement, the Army had only selectively used stop loss to retain personnel with special skills.

to suspend elements of DOPMA.[84] That action enabled the Army to further increase promotion

opportunity, expand the use of selective continuation, and reduce promotion timing.[85] The Army

increased promotion opportunities for grades O-3 to O-6 making promotions to captain, major,

and lieutenant colonel nearly guaranteed; more than 88 percent of all officers considered for these

grades received promotion.[86] The Army also reduced promotion timing for promotion to major

from 11 to 10 years.[87] Coupled with increased use of selective continuation boards, the effect of

these measures was an end to the decline of net retention. Data reveal that net retention increased

from FY 2005 to 2006 more than fourfold.[88]

       While the Army was experiencing the aforementioned challenges, it too, commissioned

another OPMS Task Force review. The task force conducted its review from 2004 to 2006, and

based upon its recommendations, the Army Chief of Staff authorized implementation of seven

enhancements to OPMS beginning September 5, 2006.[89] However, once again, none of the

enhancements tackled the problems caused by DOPMA. Figure 3, below, illustrates the Army's

problem by showing the projected "line" officer shortage for FY 2007. Each vertical bar

represents the number of officers in a particular year group (YG). Bars with different colors

represent officers who earned promotion either ahead (illustrated by a different color at the

bottom of the bar) or later (illustrated by a different color at the top of the bar) than their peers.

The figure, further, groups each year group according to its corresponding officer grade, and the

black line represents the number of officers required by each year group. As the figure clearly

illustrates, in FY 2007, the Army faced a projected shortage of captains and majors spanning YGs

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[84] Henning, 9.

[85] Ibid, 16.

[86] See Appendix A, Table 11: Officer Promotion Opportunity, FY 2001-2005.

[87] Henning, 10.

[88] See Appendix A, Table 13: Net Retention and Separation of Officers, FY 1980-2009.

[89] Department of the Army, *Implementation of Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) Changes*, ALARACT 162/2006 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 051822Z SEP 06).

1991 to 2002. All other YGs either met or exceeded Army requirements. Under DOPMA's closed, time-based system, the Army had to hasten promotions and limit separations to address this problem. Yet, the extent to which the Army needed to take these actions necessitated suspension of DOPMA provisions.

SOURCE: Department of the Army as published in Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report RL33518 (Congressional Research Service, July 5, 2006), 2.
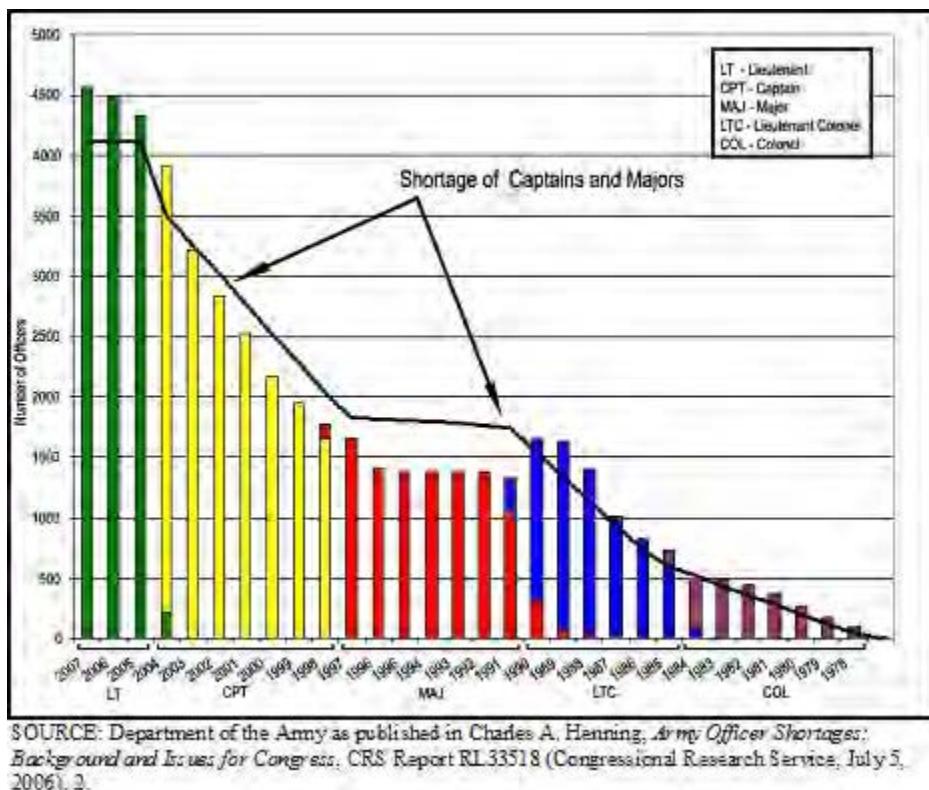
Figure 3: FY 2007 Army Officer Projection by Year Group

Data presented reveal that despite investment of significant intellectual effort, the Army remains constrained by DOPMA rules governing promotions and separations. Three organizational reviews of OPMS have produced changes to the system. Yet, these changes have failed to equip the Army with the tools necessary to fully meet it requirements. Similar to actions taken in the 1990s, the Army has had to suspend provisions of DOPMA to meet officer requirements in the first decade of the 21st Century. With an understanding of the impact that DOPMA has on Army officer management, it is useful to examine potential implications that this reality might have for future Army officer careers.

Future Implications

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The Army Capstone Concept Operational Adaptability – Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, published on December 21, 2009, describes "the broad capabilities the Army will require in 2016-2028."[90] This document serves as the Army's foundation for future force development and modernization efforts and typically undergoes revision ever two to four years.[91] Speaking about the Army Capstone Concept (ACC) in a promotional video, GEN Martin Dempsey, Commanding General, TRADOC, commented, "We think this particular revision of the capstone concept is particularly important, because it captures the lessons of the last eight years of war."[92] The ACC defines the future operational environment for the Army as both complex and uncertain resulting from the interplay of myriad geopolitical, social, economic, technological, and natural factors.[93] Therefore, according to this view, success of the Army in the future will require "organizations, Soldiers [sic], and leaders who can understand and adapt to the complexity and uncertainty of future armed conflict."[94]

Central to the ACC is "operational adaptability," which the authors define as, "the ability to integrate joint and interagency assets, develop the situation through action, and adjust rapidly to changing situations."[95] Authors of the ACC describe six supporting ideas that will contribute to the Army's ability to apply operational adaptability in future operations. However, two of these ideas have significant implications for future officer personnel management. The first idea is that of integrating joint capabilities. The ACC acknowledges that future armed conflict will require

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[90] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, i.

[91] The Army published the last revision of this document in 2005.

[92] Martin Dempsey, "Comments on the Army Capstone Concept" in *The 2009 Army Capstone Concept* [video], available at: http://www.vimeo.com/7066453 (accessed March 27, 2011).

[93] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 9.

[94] Ibid, 15.

[95] Ibid, i.

commanders to seamlessly integrate joint capabilities into operational plans. This integration will

have the emergent capability of producing synergy, which joint doctrine states, "result[s] in

greater combat power and operational effectiveness" of joint force commanders (JFCs).[96] This

means that future Army capabilities must be interoperable with those of the other Services. These

capabilities include the individual skills and talents of personnel. Therefore, as the Army

continues to explore innovative approaches to managing its officer corps, it will also have to

consider how any changes it adopts might influence future interoperability with the rest of the

military community. This reality has the potential to be quite beneficial if all the Services share a

common view regarding officer personnel management. However, the different approaches taken

by the Services in the 1990s to reduce their ranks suggest that such a common view is unlikely.[97]

Similarly, the second idea of cooperating with partners implies working with interagency,

inter-governmental, and multinational organizations. The desired effect is the same, which is

increased operational effectiveness and successful completion of stated goals and objectives.

However, this idea presents several challenges different from improving joint operations.

Although differences exist among the Services, they are all military organizations and operate

around a common ethos. That is not the case for non-military organizations. Stark differences in

organizational cultures can create significant barriers to effective partnerships. Additionally,

disparities in organizational capabilities can create stifling rifts that limit the degree of

collaboration achieved between different elements. Because of its need to create effective

partnerships and operate in a complex and uncertain environment, the ACC states that the Army

must, "continue to expand efforts to develop leaders who have expertise in relevant disciplines

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[96] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Planning*, JP 5-0 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 26 December 2006), IV-28.

[97] For a discussion of the different approaches taken by the Services to meet reduction targets, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Downsizing: Balancing Accessions and Losses is Key to Shaping the Future*, GAO/NSIAD-93-241, September 1993.

through broadening experiences and education in high quality graduate education programs."[98] This requirement may pose significant challenges for Army personnel managers who must design career paths within the limited time windows outlined by DOPMA.

In one of the final comments in the ACC promotional video, GEN Dempsey states, "I think how we best serve the Army is by recognizing the talents of different individuals in and out of uniform."[99] This idea of recognizing talent or individual skills is consistent with the broadening of experiences for officers espoused by the ACC, and it may provide the basis for a new approach to officer management. Whereas the current system encourages time spent in the military, a new system might place a greater emphasis on unique skills and abilities that enhance organizational effectiveness. This new emphasis could lead to the exploration of more opportunities for lateral-entry into the military. Additionally, the Army might consider encouraging officers to pursue breaks in service. Such an idea would allow officers to truly broaden their experiences through the pursuit of other interests outside of the military.

This focus on talent also has a close correlation to the trend in globalization discussed by Thomas Friedman in his book, *The World is Flat: A Brief history of the Twenty-First Century.* In this book, Friedman argues that the proliferation of information technology has reduced traditional barriers to competition thereby "flattening" the playing field on which people and organizations compete. As more people gain access to greater quantities of information, individuals and the unique skills that they possess become increasingly important. Although the Army's enhancements to OPMS have attempted to provide greater opportunities for officers to explore individual interests and develop expertise in specialty areas, the overriding DOPMA system establishes a rigid superstructure that generally views officers in terms of authorizations and inventory; essentially, every officer is equal. Given the complex and uncertain environment

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[98] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 23.

[99] Dempsey.

of future conflicts envisioned by the ACC, it is conceivable that a contemporary Army management system would consider such factors as individual talent, skill, and ability. Such a system would seek to produce synergistic effects at the individual as well as the organizational level.

A 2006 RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) Study entitled *Challenging Time in DOPMA: Flexible and Contemporary Military Officer Management,* examined the feasibility of shifting from DOPMA's time-based system to a competency-based system. The study defined "competency" as an officer's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Similar to findings previously discussed in this research, the RAND study assessed that the relatively fixed promotion points of DOPMA compel a tradeoff between the length and number of assignments available to officers. Whereas the length of an assignment correlates to the depth of knowledge, skill, and ability that an officer may develop in a particular area, the number of assignments held by an officer correlates to his breadth of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Lengthening officer careers under the DOPMA system without addressing promotion points simply results in more time in the grade from which an officer retires or separates. The problem with this approach is that officers may not receive necessary developmental opportunities to capitalize on the longer time spent at grades that are more senior. Under the RAND studies' competency-based system, officers would compete for promotion based upon "accumulated experience gained through jobs, education, and training."[100] Although the RAND study found that DOD could achieve greater flexibility in officer management by simply adjusting its policies, such actions would be only a partial solution, because career lengths would remain unchanged.[101] As previous analysis has shown, through its provisions on promotions and separations, DOPMA establishes officer career

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[100] Peter Schirmer, Harry J. Thie, Margaret C. Harrell, Michael S. Tseng, *Challenging Time in DOPMA: Flexible and Contemporary Military Officer Management* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), xvi.

[101] Ibid, xvii.

lengths. Therefore, complete implementation of the competency-based system proposed by the RAND study requires changes in both policy and law.

This brief examination of Army requirements outlined in the ACC ultimately suggests that the Army could benefit from its officers having longer careers as such a change would facilitate greater breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Interestingly, this idea is not wholly novel. Writing in 1985, William L. Hauser[102] was tremendously critical of the officer management system imposed by DOPMA and its immediate predecessor, OPA. In an article titled, "Restoring Military Professionalism", Hauser argued that the effect of these laws was "a sharp dissonance between the classic concept of a lifetime profession in the military and a new reality that, for almost all officers, their military service is only the first of their careers."[103] According to Hauser, "rapid advances in technology combined with the shorter career's transience, make it nearly impossible to become expert at anything."[104] Considering the renewed interest in exploring changes to Army officer careers and the factors influencing this change, Hauser's criticism of DOPMA more than 20 years ago appears tremendously prescient.

Conclusion

In its current state, DOPMA imposes an antiquated system of military officer management upon the Army. This system has repeatedly impeded the Army's ability to meet organizational requirements over the course of 30 years. In fact, the Army has had to seek suspension of key provisions of DOPMA in the 1990s (to achieve mandated reduction limits to its force) and more recently in 2005 (to facilitate expansion of the Army officer corps due to modularity). These events have occurred despite significant, repeated attempts by the Army to

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[102] William L. Hauser was a career Army officer (1954-79), and since retiring, he has remained involved with the military, working with several administrations on policy. For a complete biography and list of works, see: http://williamlhauser.com/.

[103] William L. Hauser, "Restoring Military Professionalism" *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* (August 12, 1985): 3.

[104] Ibid, 4.

redesign its OPMS to function optimally under DOPMA. Therefore, barring a change to DOPMA's closed, time-based system of officer management, the Army will not be able to re-engineer its OPMS in any way that is revolutionary and enabling towards meeting future requirements.

Examination of DOPMA, its development and impact on the Army, has revealed that major provisions of the law originated from previous legislation dating as early as 1947. At that time, three of the major concerns influencing officer management legislation were creating uniformity among the Services, promoting a youthful and vigorous officer corps, and ensuring the military's ability to quickly mobilize in the event of another major conflict. Those concerns contributed to development of the Officer Personnel Act and the Officer Grade Limitation Act. Despite significant organizational changes resulting from initiation of the Total Force Policy, transition to an all-volunteer force, and the military drawdown following the end of the Cold War, DOPMA, through its time-based system, continues to impose 20th Century personnel management practices on the military.

During the first six years of implementation, DOPMA reasonably well accommodated increased officer requirements resulting from a buildup of the military. The Services' use of increased promotion opportunities had the effect of reducing separations and resultantly increasing the size of the officer corps. However, during the latter half of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the Services struggled to meet officer reduction targets. Initially, most of the Services achieved reductions through reduced accessions, but these reductions triggered automatic officer redistribution requirements prescribed by DOPMA. Furthermore, because DOPMA establishes a closed system in which most officers enter at the bottom, continued reliance on reduced accessions would jeopardize the future of the officer corps. Therefore, the Services had to use separations to achieve reduction targets. DOPMA's tenure rules precluded the Services from involuntarily separating most officers, so Congress amended the law, relaxed officer distribution requirements, and provided the Services with incentive programs aimed at

reducing the number of officers with 11 to 19 years of service. Although changes to DOPMA allowed the Services to reach mandated reduction targets, the Army's experiences in the first part of the 21st Century revealed additional shortcomings with the law.

The Army's force modernization initiative that began in 2001 significantly increased the Army's requirement for officers. Initially, increased accessions and promotion opportunities were able to increase the size of the officer corps. However, two years later, these measures were no longer sufficient, so the Army implemented stop loss, which authorized the involuntary extension of personnel on active duty. Additionally, the Army increased its use of selective continuation boards, allowing officers to remain on active duty after failing to gain promotion. Although the aggregate result of all these measures was an increase in Army officers, more officers were choosing to leave as evidenced by a dramatic drop in net retention from 2003 to 2005. The Army responded in 2005 by suspending certain provisions of DOPMA. That suspension allowed the Army to increase promotion opportunities, decrease promotion timing, and extend use of selective continuation boards well beyond the limits outlined by DOPMA. Only after the Army took these measures did net retention begin to rise, highlighting the inhibitive effect of DOPMA on the Army.

This study provides context for understanding key issues involved in redesigning Army officer careers. Data presented identify four provisions of DOPMA that the Army, through coordination with the other Services and with assistance from the DOD, should seek to modify if it wants to acquire the skills and talents in its officer corps articulated in the Army Capstone Concept of 2009. The findings in this study facilitate additional research into specific alternatives to the existing officer management system. Considerations for such alternatives might include increased lateral-entry opportunities into the Army, a revised compensation and incentives system that considers individual talent and skills, and modifications to the existing retirement system. Ultimately, 21st Century requirements necessitate a change to the current system of officer management that has its roots in obsolescent, post-WWII concerns and legislation.

APPENDIX: Statistical Data

Table 6: Active Duty Military Personnel, 1959-1987

YEAR	TOTAL	ARMY B/	NAVY	MARINE CORPS	B/ C/ AIR FORCE
1959	2,503,631	861,964	625,661	175,571	840,435
1960	2,475,438	873,078	616,987	170,621	814,752
1961	2,482,905	858,622	626,223	176,909	821,151
1962	2,805,603	1,066,404	664,212	190,962	884,025
1963	2,698,927	975,916	663,897	189,683	869,431
1964	2,685,782	973,238	665,969	189,777	856,798
1965	2,653,926	969,066	669,985	190,213	824,662
1966	3,092,175	1,199,784	743,322	261,716	887,353
1967	3,375,485	1,442,498	750,224	285,269	897,494
1968	3,546,071	1,570,343	763,626	307,252	904,850
1969	3,458,072	1,512,169	773,779	309,771	862,353
1970	3,064,760	1,322,548	691,126	259,737	791,349
1971	2,713,044	1,123,810	621,565	212,369	755,300
1972	2,321,959	810,960	586,923	198,238	725,838
1973	2,251,936	800,973	563,683	196,098	691,182
1974	2,162,005	783,330	545,903	188,802	643,970
1975	2,128,120	784,333	535,085	195,951	612,751
1976	2,081,910	779,417	524,678	192,399	585,416
1977	2,074,543	782,246	529,895	191,707	570,695
1978	2,061,708	771,624	529,557	190,815	569,712
1979	2,026,892	758,852	523,335	185,250	559,455
1980	2,050,627	777,036	527,153	188,469	557,969
1981	2,082,560	781,419	540,219	190,620	570,302
1982	2,108,612	780,391	552,996	192,380	582,845
1983	2,123,349	779,643	557,573	194,089	592,044
1984	2,138,157	780,180	564,638	196,214	597,125
1985	2,151,032	780,787	570,705	198,025	601,515
1986	2,169,112	780,980	581,119	198,814	608,199
1987	2,174,217	780,815	586,842	199,525	607,035

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center, Statistical Information Analysis Division, *Selected Manpower Statistics FY 2005*, 43.

Table 7: Active Duty Military Personnel, 1988-2005

YEAR	TOTAL	ARMY B/	NAVY	MARINE CORPS	B/ C/ AIR FORCE
1988	2,138,213	771,847	592,570	197,350	576,446
1989	2,130,229	769,741	592,652	196,956	570,880
1990	2,043,705	732,403	579,417	196,652	535,233
1991	1,985,555	710,821	570,262	194,040	510,432
1992	1,807,177	610,450	541,883	184,529	470,315
1993	1,705,103	572,423	509,950	178,379	444,351
1994	1,610,490	541,343	468,662	174,158	426,327
1995	1,518,224	508,559	434,617	174,639	400,409
1996	1,471,722	491,103	416,735	174,883	389,001
1997	1,438,562	491,707	395,564	173,906	377,385
1998	1,406,830	483,880	382,338	173,142	367,470
1999	1,385,703	479,426	373,046	172,641	360,590
2000	1,384,338	482,170	373,193	173,321	355,654
2001	1,385,116	480,801	377,810	172,934	353,571
2002	1,411,634	486,542	383,108	173,733	368,251
2003	1,434,377	499,301	382,235	177,779	375,062
2004	1,426,836	499,543	373,197	177,480	376,616
2005	1,389,394	492,728	362,941	180,029	353,696

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center, Statistical Information Analysis Division, *Selected Manpower Statistics FY 2005*, 44.

Table 8: Active Component Officer Accessions, FY 1973-2009

| FISCAL YEAR | SERVICE | | | | | | | | TOTAL DoD |
	ARMY		NAVY		MARINE CORPS		AIR FORCE		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1973	10,928	34.6%	7,369	23.3%	2,631	8.3%	10,635	33.7%	31,563
1974	8,282	32.7%	6,503	25.7%	1,969	7.8%	8,548	33.8%	25,302
1975	8,065	34.2%	5,637	23.9%	2,216	9.4%	7,685	32.6%	23,603
1976	7,943	36.1%	5,912	26.9%	2,035	9.3%	6,097	27.7%	21,987
1977	7,863	36.4%	5,718	26.5%	1,689	7.8%	6,324	29.3%	21,594
1978	9,109	38.5%	5,423	22.9%	1,613	6.8%	7,494	31.7%	23,639
1979	8,579	32.9%	5,740	22.0%	1,624	6.2%	10,132	38.9%	26,075
1980	8,055	32.2%	6,015	24.0%	1,522	6.1%	9,450	37.7%	25,042
1981	8,254	33.6%	6,707	27.3%	1,506	6.1%	8,086	32.9%	24,553
1982	7,248	30.2%	6,262	26.1%	1,784	7.4%	8,700	36.3%	23,994
1983	7,618	30.2%	6,626	26.3%	1,923	7.6%	9,034	35.8%	25,201
1984	8,185	33.6%	5,405	22.2%	1,627	6.7%	9,170	37.6%	24,387
1985	8,051	31.6%	6,942	27.2%	1,407	5.5%	9,109	35.7%	25,509
1986	7,564	32.0%	6,772	28.6%	1,592	6.7%	7,727	32.7%	23,655
1987	6,794	32.9%	5,781	28.0%	1,374	6.6%	6,731	32.5%	20,680
1988	6,818	32.8%	5,921	28.5%	1,351	6.5%	6,679	32.2%	20,769
1989	7,457	33.2%	5,944	26.4%	1,652	7.3%	7,427	33.0%	22,480
1990	6,457	33.5%	6,184	32.0%	1,384	7.2%	5,276	27.3%	19,301
1991	5,531	33.2%	4,814	28.9%	1,292	7.7%	5,035	30.2%	16,672
1992	5,269	32.5%	4,851	29.9%	1,377	8.5%	4,732	29.2%	16,229
1993	5,104	34.4%	3,992	26.9%	1,040	7.0%	4,683	31.6%	14,819
1994	5,703	36.3%	4,051	25.8%	1,221	7.8%	4,755	30.2%	15,730
1995	5,578	35.4%	4,041	25.7%	1,257	8.0%	4,870	30.9%	15,746
1996	4,964	33.2%	3,858	25.8%	1,565	10.5%	4,566	30.5%	14,953
1997	5,736	36.5%	3,981	25.3%	1,428	9.1%	4,573	29.1%	15,718
1998	5,381	34.5%	4,007	25.7%	1,443	9.3%	4,763	30.5%	15,594
1999	5,303	32.4%	4,518	27.6%	1,446	8.8%	5,090	31.1%	16,357
2000	5,820	33.2%	4,801	27.4%	1,470	8.4%	5,457	31.1%	17,548
2001	5,937	33.8%	5,022	28.6%	1,411	8.0%	5,211	29.6%	17,581
2002	6,423	29.8%	5,340	24.8%	2,042	9.5%	7,713	35.8%	21,518
2003	6,334	33.7%	4,123	21.9%	1,323	7.0%	7,028	37.4%	18,808
2004	6,303	33.0%	5,700	29.9%	1,251	6.6%	5,830	30.5%	19,084
2005	6,517	37.2%	3,581	20.5%	1,929	11.0%	5,482	31.3%	17,509
2006	6,735	40.9%	3,746	22.7%	1,596	9.7%	4,409	26.7%	16,486
2007	7,535	42.5%	3,860	21.8%	1,928	10.9%	4,390	24.8%	17,713
2008	7,494	42.9%	4,024	23.1%	1,838	10.5%	4,101	23.5%	17,457
2009	7,875	43.0%	4,068	22.2%	1,678	9.2%	4,711	25.7%	18,332

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Population Representation in the Military Services FY2009 Report*, Appendix D: Historical Data Tables, 18.

Table 9: Active Component Officer Strength, FY 1973-2009

FISCAL YEAR	ARMY		NAVY		MARINE CORPS		AIR FORCE		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	DoD
1973	101,194	33.7%	66,337	22.1%	17,784	5.9%	114,962	38.3%	300,277
1974	91,872	32.5%	63,380	22.4%	17,421	6.2%	110,437	39.0%	283,110
1975	87,215	32.6%	60,422	22.6%	17,080	6.4%	102,849	38.4%	267,566
1976	85,600	32.6%	59,992	22.9%	17,594	6.7%	99,228	37.8%	262,414
1977	84,627	32.7%	60,274	23.3%	17,524	6.8%	96,244	37.2%	258,669
1978	84,330	32.9%	59,672	23.3%	17,180	6.7%	95,462	37.2%	256,644
1979	84,496	32.9%	59,189	23.1%	16,934	6.6%	96,129	37.4%	256,748
1980	85,352	32.8%	60,237	23.1%	16,974	6.5%	97,901	37.6%	260,464
1981	87,923	32.9%	62,678	23.4%	17,091	6.4%	99,630	37.3%	267,322
1982	88,984	32.5%	64,571	23.6%	17,712	6.5%	102,188	37.4%	273,455
1983	91,084	32.4%	66,874	23.8%	18,583	6.6%	104,879	37.3%	281,420
1984	92,796	32.7%	65,796	23.2%	18,945	6.7%	106,239	37.4%	283,776
1985	94,372	32.7%	67,521	23.4%	18,697	6.5%	108,400	37.5%	288,990
1986	94,845	32.5%	68,922	23.6%	18,734	6.4%	109,051	37.4%	291,552
1987	93,160	32.3%	69,071	24.0%	18,730	6.5%	107,340	37.2%	288,301
1988	92,170	32.3%	69,576	24.4%	18,558	6.5%	105,127	36.8%	285,431
1989	91,900	32.4%	69,475	24.5%	18,466	6.5%	103,699	36.6%	283,540
1990	89,672	32.3%	69,426	25.0%	18,105	6.5%	100,047	36.1%	277,250
1991	88,747	32.7%	67,980	25.1%	17,775	6.6%	96,600	35.6%	271,102
1992	81,312	31.9%	66,253	26.0%	17,270	6.8%	90,378	35.4%	255,213
1993	75,062	31.4%	63,608	26.6%	16,547	6.9%	84,076	35.1%	239,293
1994	72,410	31.7%	59,265	25.9%	16,003	7.0%	81,004	35.4%	228,682
1995	70,814	32.0%	56,408	25.5%	15,852	7.2%	78,444	35.4%	221,518
1996	68,971	31.8%	55,602	25.6%	16,028	7.4%	76,389	35.2%	216,990
1997	67,994	32.0%	54,382	25.6%	16,002	7.5%	73,984	34.8%	212,362
1998	66,980	32.2%	53,206	25.6%	16,075	7.7%	71,893	34.5%	208,154
1999	66,104	32.3%	52,136	25.5%	16,055	7.8%	70,321	34.4%	204,616
2000	65,352	32.4%	51,540	25.5%	16,008	7.9%	69,022	34.2%	201,922
2001	64,797	32.2%	51,928	25.8%	16,160	8.0%	68,038	33.9%	200,923
2002	66,583	32.1%	52,961	25.5%	16,402	7.9%	71,687	34.5%	207,633
2003	67,953	32.1%	53,323	25.2%	16,787	7.9%	73,643	34.8%	211,706
2004	68,634	32.3%	52,707	24.8%	16,742	7.9%	74,304	35.0%	212,387
2005	68,932	32.8%	51,291	24.4%	16,879	8.0%	73,251	34.8%	210,353
2006	69,616	33.5%	50,409	24.3%	17,102	8.2%	70,539	34.0%	207,666
2007	70,839	34.7%	49,822	24.4%	17,804	8.7%	65,722	32.2%	204,187
2008	72,928	35.4%	49,735	24.2%	18,297	8.9%	64,805	31.5%	205,765
2009	75,619	36.0%	50,385	24.0%	18,733	8.9%	65,496	31.2%	210,233

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Population Representation in the Military Services FY2009 Report*, Appendix D: Historical Data Tables, 20.

Table 10: Average Officer Promotion Opportunity, FY 1979-1990

Service	Year	O-6 DOPMA = 50%	O-5 DOPMA = 70%	O-4 DOPMA = 80%	Service	Year	O-6 DOPMA = 50%	O-5 DOPMA = 70%	O-4 DOPMA = 80%
Army	90	46%	73%	79%	USMC	90	51%	65%	71%
	89	45%	70%	80%		89	48%	66%	70%
	88	47%	73%	78%		88	49%	70%	79%
	87	49%	77%	82%		87	55%	69%	79%
	86	51%	NB[a]	75%		86	60%	75%	80%
	85	52%	88%	87%		85	61%	73%	80%
	84	59%	85%	86%		84	60%	75%	80%
	83	57%	87%	87%		83	60%	75%	80%
	82	60%	77%	87%		82	60%	75%	80%
	81	51%	72%	76%		81	60%	75%	85%
	80	53%	72%	74%		80	60%	75%	85%
	79	59%	75%	79%		79	55%	70%	80%
Navy	90	56%	72%	86%	Air Force	90	55%	74%	89%
	89	55%	70%	80%		89	55%	75%	NB[a]
	88	56%	72%	82%		88	NB[a]	75%	90%
	87	57%	74%	88%		87	56%	75%	89%
	86	57%	74%	83%		86	60%	73%	90%
	85	58%	76%	86%		85	57%	77%	91%
	84	60%	75%	84%		84	55%	75%	90%
	83	61%	80%	85%		83	55%	75%	90%
	82	70%	82%	90%		82	55%	75%	90%
	81	70%	85%	95%		81	55%	75%	90%
	80	63%	80%	90%		80	50%	75%	90%
	79	60%	70%	97%		79	50%	70%	80%

[a]NB = No Board

Average opportunity for all competitive categories, computed by totaling all officers due course, above, and below zone promotions and dividing by the number of officers in zone.

SOURCE: Office of the Assistant SECDEF (FM&P) (MM&PP) (O&EPM), August 19, 1991, as published in Bernard Rostker, Harry Thie, James Lacy, Jennifer Kawata, Susanna Purnell, *The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980: A Retrospective Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1993), 106.

Table 11: Officer Promotion Opportunity, FY 2001-2005

Promotion to Rank of:	DOPMA Goal	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005
Captain	95%	99.0%	98.2%	98.9%	92.3%	98.4%
Major	80%	83.0%	89.5%	93.8%	96.9%	97.7%
Lieutenant Colonel*	70%	75.7%	77.3%	79.6%	79.0%	88.7%
Colonel*	50%	55.9%	53.5%	52.6%	53.2%	59.7%

* Operations Career Field Only

SOURCE: Department of the Army, as published in Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report RL33518 (Congressional Research Service, July 5, 2006), 9.

Table 12: Average Officer Promotion Timing, FY 1979-1990

Service Year	O-6 DOPMA = 22±1	O-5 DOPMA = 16±1	O-4 DOPMA = 10±1	Service Year	O-6 DOPMA = 22±1	O-5 DOPMA = 16±1	O-4 DOPMA = 10±1
Army 90	22-7	17-2	11-4	USMC 90	21-3	16-10	12-1
89	22-7	17-7	11-10	89	21-10	16-11	12-2
88	22-4	17-6	17-2	88	21-10	16-6	11-1
87	22-1	17-2	11-7	87	21-11	16-4	10-10
86	22-6	17-6	11-1	86	21-8	16-8	10-11
85	22-0	16-8	11-4	85	21-6	16-0	11-2
84	22-3	16-6	11-7	84	22-0	16-0	11-3
83	21-11	16-5	11-7	83	21-9	15-10	10-4
82	21-6	16-11	11-6	82	21-11	15-0	10-3
81	21-7	15-10	11-0	81	22-2	15-3	9-8
80	21-7	15-11	10-11	80	22-4	15-3	10-0
79	21-0	16-2	11-0	79	22-6	16-4	10-6
Navy 90	21-0	15-4	10-2	Air Force 90	21-6	16-2	11-0
89	21-4	15-4	10-0	89	21-8	16-4	ND
88	21-1	15-2	9-10	88	ND	15-11	9-10
87	21-0	15-1	9-8	87	22-0	16-2	10-8
86	20-11	15-6	9-6	86	21-1	16-5	10-8
85	21-0	15-3	9-6	85	20-6	16-4	11-0
84	21-3	15-1	9-4	84	20-6	16-3	11-7
83	21-5	14-9	9-3	83	20-6	16-9	11-8
82	21-6	14-9	9-3	82	20-6	16-0	11-10
81	21-5	14-8	9-0	81	20-6	16-9	11-9
80	21-5	14-9	9-3	80	20-8	15-8	11-7
79	21-9	14-10	9-3	79	21-2	16-0	11-9

Average promotion timing for all competitive categories is the number of years and months of active commissioned service plus entry-grade credit at which officers earn promotion to a particular grade.

Table 13: Net Retention and Separation of Officers, FY 1980-2009

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
FY	DOD Officer Accessions	DOD Officer Strength	Change in DOD Officer Accessions	Change in DOD Officer Strength	Net Retention / Separation of DOD Officers	Army Officer Accessions	Army Officer Strength	Change in Army Officer Accessions	Change in Army Officer Strength	Net Retention / Separation of DOD Officers
1979	26075	256748				8579	84496			
1980	25042	260464	-1033	3716		8055	85352	-824	856	
1981	24553	267322	-489	6858		8254	87923	199	2571	
1982	23994	273455	-559	6133		7248	88984	-1006	1061	
1983	25201	281420	1207	7965		7618	91084	370	2100	
1984	24387	283776	-814	2356		8185	92796	567	1712	
1985	25509	288990	1122	5214		8061	94372	-134	1576	
1986	23655	291552	-1854	2562		7564	94845	-487	473	
1987	20680	288301	-2975	-3251		6794	93160	-770	-1685	
1988	20769	285431	89	-2870		6818	92170	24	-990	
1989	22480	283540	1711	-1891		7457	91900	639	-270	
1990	19301	277250	-3179	-6290		6457	89672	-1000	-2228	
1991	16672	271102	-2629	-6148		5531	88747	-926	-925	
1992	16229	255213	-443	-15889		5269	81312	-262	-7435	
1993	14819	239293	-1410	-15920		5104	75062	-165	-6250	
1994	15730	228682	911	-10611		5703	72410	599	-2652	
1995	15746	221518	16	-7164		5578	70814	-125	-1596	
1996	14953	216990	-793	-4528		4964	68971	-614	-1843	
1997	15718	212362	765	-4628		5736	67994	772	-977	
1998	15594	208154	-124	-4208		5381	66980	-355	-1014	
1999	16357	204616	763	-3538		5303	66104	-78	-876	
2000	17548	201922	1191	-2694		5820	65352	517	-752	
2001	17581	200923	33	-999		5937	64797	117	-555	
2002	21518	207633	3937	6710		6423	66583	486	1786	
2003	18808	211706	-2710	4073		6334	67953	-89	1370	
2004	19084	212387	276	681		6303	68634	-31	681	
2005	17509	210353	-1575	-2034		6517	68932	214	298	
2006	16486	207666	-1023	-2687		6735	69616	218	684	
2007	17713	204187	1227	-3479		7535	70839	800	1223	
2008	17457	205765	-256	1578		7494	72928	-41	2089	
2009	18332	210233	875	4468		7875	75819	381	2691	

NOTE: Data for columns 1 - 3, 7, and 8 from U.S. Department of Defense, *Population Representation in the Military Services FY2009 Report*.

= Net Retention
= Separations

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